AIR NZ BOOSTS AUSTRALIAN PRESENCE WITH NEW BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL LOUNGE

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Air New Zealand has opened the doors to a new premium lounge at Brisbane Airport, the latest example of the airline's investment in the Australian market as it seeks to attract more travellers from this side of the Tasman onto its long-haul services.

The facility, which was built in a brand new space at the southern end of the Brisbane international terminal, welcomed its first guests on Wednesday.

The new lounge has space for about 200 people, about 70 per cent more than the old lounge that was located at the opposite side of the terminal.

Like the Sydney, Auckland and Air NZ-operated Star Alliance lounge in Los Angeles, the Brisbane lounge was designed by US-based architects Gensler.

Air NZ is spending $100 million over four years on its lounge network, with Sydney completed in May and the new refurbished Auckland international terminal lounge unveiled in September.

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The Star Alliance member has focused heavily on boosting international transfer passengers in recent times, with a particular emphasis on capturing a larger share of Australians heading to the Americas, where it serves six destinations – Buenos Aires, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Vancouver.

Efforts have included sale fares of less than $1,000 for a return ticket to the US, while Air NZ has added extra flights from Perth to Auckland to facilitate shorter connection times on its long-haul flights.

And for passengers in Brisbane or Melbourne, there may be some attraction in an international-to-international connection at Auckland, where they remain in the same terminal and have the option of flying on widebody aircraft on both legs, rather than a domestic-to-international transit in Australia.

The airline expected to increase capacity seven per cent across its network in the second half of 2015/16, with short-haul services, which include its Australian flights to expand by five per cent, while long-haul services were tipped to grow nine per cent.

Air New Zealand general manager for customer experience Carrie Hurihanganui said the new lounge would improve the customer experience.

“We’re proud to offer our customers a seamless transition to the new lounge and we’re certain they will enjoy everything about the space,” Hurihanganui said in a statement.

“From the tailored seating zones, relaxing colour palette and dedicated children’s play spaces, to the enhanced food and beverage offering, the lounge provides a comfortable haven whether customers are travelling for work or leisure.”

In keeping with the recently refurbished Sydney and Auckland lounges, the Brisbane lounge features different seating types, from lounge chairs to long benches and quiet nooks for users to work, rest or play prior to their flight as well as a theatre kitchen and children’s play area.

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The light feature in the dining area is understood to have taken inspiration from Brisbane's Story Bridge. (Air NZ)

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